

# MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held at County Hall, Usk, on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2015 at 10.30 a.m.

### PRESENT:

Mrs. P. Reeves (Chairman)  
County Councillors D. Evans and D.L. Edwards

### INDEPENDENT REPRESENTATIVES:

Mr. T. Auld, Mr G Powell, M. Sutton and Mr G. Preece

### COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE:

Community Councillor Mrs I. Cameron

### OFFICERS PRESENT:

Mr. R. Tranter - Monitoring Officer  
Mr. R. Williams - Democratic Services Officer

### 1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

We elected Mrs. P. Reeves as Chairman.

### 2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

We appointed Mr. T. Auld as Vice-Chairman.

### 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

### 4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

### 5. MINUTES

We resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments:

- Page 4, Minute 4.i), sixth paragraph – the first word be amended to read 'Complainant'.
- Page 4, Minute 4.i), seventh paragraph, first line – 'address' be amended to read 'redress'.
- Page 5, Minute 4.i), first bullet point, fourth line – 'responds' be amended to read 'respond'.

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- Page 8, Minute 4.iii), sub heading - a) Public Interest test, second paragraph – remove first line.

## **6. REPORTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER**

### **i) CORRESPONDENCE RESPONSE TIMES FOR MEMBERS**

We received a report by the Monitoring Officer regarding the Council's Corporate Customer Standards in respect of emails / letters received from Members of the public.

In response to a Committee member's question regarding the process for monitoring compliance, the Monitoring Officer stated that regarding officer complaints, the Authority has an annual report prepared by the Customer Services Manager which is presented to the Standards Committee and to the Audit Committee. Information in the form of complaints / compliments is collated on an annual basis. The Council also has an internal complaints process for the purposes of the ombudsman. However, the ombudsman would expect the complainant to adhere to the internal complaints procedure before the matter is referred to the ombudsman.

We resolved that Full Council considers, at its next meeting, that Members adhere to the Council's Corporate Customer Standards in respect of emails / letters received from members of the public.

### **ii) REVISED GUIDANCE ON THE MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT FROM THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES**

We received a report by the Monitoring Officer regarding the revised guidance issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) in March 2015.

In doing so, the following points were noted:

- The Monitoring Officer will email a link regarding the revised guidance to all Members of the Council and to all town and community clerks within Monmouthshire.
- Members' code of conduct training is undertaken at the beginning of each new Council.
- Code of conduct training is also provided for town and community councils within Monmouthshire. Town / community clerks contact the Monitoring officer directly should there be a need for additional training sessions and the training sessions are arranged accordingly.
- Training in respect of the Members' code of conduct is an ongoing issue.
- The Committee suggested that a mid-term training session for Members regarding the Members' code of conduct might be appropriate.

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- Standards Committee Members should be invited to attend future training sessions in respect of the Members' code of conduct.
- One Voice Wales has links with town and community councils. This organisation could help in getting the message out to these council's regarding this matter.
- E learning was another way of getting the message out. This matter could be investigated. The ombudsman might also wish to consider this matter.
- Social media – Members are aware of the Welsh Government's guidance on social media. However, it is a matter for members to use it properly.
- It was noted that Monmouthshire County Council had recently begun live streaming its public meetings from the Council Chamber. However, it was noted that the live stream is switched off when considering reports containing exempt information under schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Enquiries would be made to ascertain the length of time a recording of a live streamed meeting remained on You Tube. The Monitoring officer would also investigate whether there was any guidance available regarding this matter.

We resolved to note the contents of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) revised guidance.

**iii) MONITORING OFFICER'S UPDATE**

The Standards Committee received an update by the Monitoring Officer regarding the following issues:

- At it's recent meeting, Council has agreed that Mr. G. Preece will serve a further term on the Standards Committee.
- The Registers of Interest were displayed for members of the committee to view. Details will be put on the Monmouthshire County Council website in due course.
- The Standards Conference will be held on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2015 at Cardiff City Hall. Four members from this Committee may attend. Members were asked to let the Monitoring Officer know by September 2015 if they would like to attend. At a recent Monitoring Officers' meeting, the Monitoring Officer from Cardiff City Council had provided a provisional agenda for the meeting.

**7. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

We noted the date of the next meeting as Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015. However, we resolved that this meeting would commence at 9.30am and that all future Standards Committee meetings would commence at 9.30am.

**The meeting ended at 11.30 am.**